

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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*****ADVISORY – Important Information*****

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TO: All Maine Health Alert Network Recipients

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SUBJECT: **Maine H1N1 Update**

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Maine H1N1 Update May 8, 2009

Update

As of the morning of May 8th, Maine has identified 12 people with H1N1 through testing, including 7 adults, 1 young adult, and 4 children or youth. They reside in York (5), Cumberland (3), Kennebec (3), and Penobscot (1) Counties. Three of the identified patients are students – one at the Lunt Elementary School in Falmouth, one at Bridgton Academy, and one early identified patient at the Kennebunk Elementary School. A recently identified patient is a young adult (with chronic underlying illness) who is hospitalized. 4 of the 12 test results have been confirmed by U.S. CDC; all 4 are in York County. 6 out of the 12 patients traveled to an area with confirmed H1N1. Of the 6 who did not travel out of state, 5 have no known contact with an identified case. Out of the over 1,000 influenza tests that have been conducted by the Maine CDC's laboratory since April 27th, 12 have been positive for un-subtypeable H1N1, and 24 have been positive for seasonal influenza, mostly type A Influenza viruses (and mostly known subtypes of H1 or H3).

These cases provide some important insights:

- As the infection spreads and re-circulates, the numbers of cases and specific locations become less meaningful. There clearly are other people with H1N1 in Maine and probably other specific locations (such as other schools and counties) involved as well. The number of identified cases simply indicates the presence of H1N1 in Maine.
- As the infection spreads we expect to see some increase in severity, as has been seen nationally.
- There appears to be a high spread among children and young adults.
- The strategies recommended the last 2 weeks continue to be very important.

Basic Resources

Because recommendations from U.S. CDC are being updated very frequently, we strongly urge clinicians, school officials, and others to review the most updated guidance before making clinical or other decisions. **We will not be issuing a health advisory for every update.** There are several resources for information:

- The U.S. CDC's website can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1/>
- Maine CDC's website has Maine-specific information, including daily updates and press updates as well as links to federal information. It is located at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/swine-flu-2009.shtml> and is found on the Maine CDC's homepage: www.mainepublichealth.gov
- Maine Department of Education's website has resources and information for schools. It can be found at: <http://www.maine.gov/education/h1n1/index.html>
- Health care providers or school officials needing updated clinical guidance should call Maine CDC's 24-hour clinical consultation line (1-800-821-5821). This is also the resource to report a suspected case and obtain testing information including expediting the transportation of samples for testing. Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) will perform influenza RT-PCR tests and subtyping for influenza A positive specimens. Instructions on collecting and submitting laboratory diagnostic specimens for H1N1 influenza testing are available at http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/etl/micro/submitting_samples.htm.
- The public information line with questions about H1N1 may also call our information support line at 1-888-257-0990 weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

Overall Strategies

The overall goal of Maine's efforts to address H1N1 is to minimize its impact in our state.

Strategies to slow the spread of this infection include:

- Having easily available tools (soap/water, hand sanitizer, tissues, reminder posters, etc) for maintaining respiratory etiquette in workplaces, schools, daycares, and wherever people are gathered;
- Isolating people with symptoms such as a fever and respiratory symptoms (whether they have had a test for influenza or not);
- Isolating appropriate household contacts;
- Encouraging people at high-risk for complications to take precautions;
- Implementing other community mitigation strategies such as closures and cancellations when appropriate.

These strategies can: delay the peak of the disease in order to “buy time” for the production and distribution of a vaccine against this new virus; decrease the number of people who get sick from this virus in a given community, thus reducing the “surge” on healthcare systems; and reduce the total number of people who get sick or die.

Because H1N1 is now found to be circulating in various parts of the globe, including places in the southern hemisphere where the time for seasonal influenza is beginning, we also need to prepare for what could be a more severe fall and winter with seasonal influenza since both H1N1 and seasonal influenza viruses could be circulating simultaneously. Such preparations include:

- Reviewing successes and lessons learned from the last two weeks and adjusting one’s pandemic influenza plans appropriately;
- Reviewing and adjusting one’s pandemic plans for a higher severity index; and
- If applicable, preparing for mass vaccinations.

The most important strategies to minimize H1N1’s impact in Maine continue to be:

- Maintain vigilant **respiratory etiquette**: covering coughs and sneezes with sleeves or a tissue; washing hands frequently; and staying home if ill, especially with a fever.
- **Stay informed** since this event is changing and so is the resulting guidance.
- **Make preparations**. If one does not have a pandemic influenza plan, then preparation check lists for a variety of settings can be found at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/checklists.html>. These plans generally call for such measures as ensuring adequate critical supplies are on hand and preparing for higher than normal absenteeism.

NEW and UPDATED Interim CDC Guidance Documents on H1N1 Flu

CDC’s goals continue to be to reduce transmission and illness severity and provide information to assist health care providers, public health officials and the public. To this end, CDC continues to develop and update interim guidance documents.

New Postings:

[UPDATED Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations for Patients with Novel Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Infection and Their Close Contacts](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm)
[\(<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>\)](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm)

This document provides updated interim guidance on the use of antiviral agents for treatment and chemoprophylaxis of novel influenza (H1N1) virus infection, and information for clinicians in prioritizing use of antivirals for treatment or chemoprophylaxis of patients at higher risk for influenza-related

complications. *Additional revisions to these interim recommendations for antiviral treatment should be expected as the epidemiology and clinical presentations of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infection are better understood.*

Recommendations include identification of groups at high risk for complications of novel influenza (H1N1) virus infection; definition of “close contact”; antiviral treatment and chemoprophylaxis recommendations (including dosing recommendations and contraindications); special considerations for treatment of children; and recommendations for treatment and chemoprophylaxis of children younger than age 1 year (including dosing recommendations) and pregnant women.

What to Do If You Get Flu-Like Symptoms (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>)

This fact sheet is targeted to individuals having or suspecting an influenza-like illness (ILI). It discusses symptom recognition, contact avoidance, treatment options, and emergency warning signs.

Interim CDC Guidance for Colleges, Universities, and Post-secondary Educational Institutions in Response to Human Infections with Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus (http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/guidelines_colleges.htm)

These interim recommendations are based on current information and are subject to change based on ongoing surveillance and continuous risk assessment. This document provides interim guidance specific to universities during the outbreak of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus on suggested means to reduce the spread of influenza in universities and their communities.

CDC is not recommending currently that colleges, universities, or post-secondary educational institutions cancel or dismiss classes or other large gatherings.

CDC is making the following recommendations: recommendations to consult with state/local public health if cases of H1N1 or ILI occur; recommendations for self-isolation of persons with ILI; recommendations on care-seeking by and care-taking of persons with ILI; recommendations for persons with ILI to avoid large gatherings; recommendations for universities and similar institutions to take in preparing for possible H1N1 outbreaks.

Additional documents for health care providers, public health officials and the public are available on www.cdc.gov. Information for the public is posted daily in both English and Spanish. Also, CDC’s toll-free hotline, 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348, is available 24 hours a day, every day.